

109TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 676

To provide for Project GRAD programs, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 17, 2005

Mr. STEVENS (for himself, Mr. FRIST, Mr. SPECTER, Mr. ALEXANDER, Mr. DEWINE, Mrs. CLINTON, and Mrs. HUTCHISON) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

A BILL

To provide for Project GRAD programs, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Graduation Really
5 Achieves Dreams Act” or the “GRAD Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress makes the following findings:

8 (1) The national secondary school graduation
9 rate is only 70 percent. For the class of 2001, the
10 national graduation rate was only 51 percent for Af-

1 rican-American students and 52 percent for Latino
2 students.

3 (2) In our Nation's high poverty urban dis-
4 tricts, as few as $\frac{1}{3}$ of students graduate from sec-
5 ondary school. In these places, completion rates
6 among certain disadvantaged groups of students are
7 often lower still.

8 (3) In rural areas, where $\frac{1}{3}$ of American stu-
9 dents attend school, only 58.8 percent of students
10 attend institutions of higher education, compared
11 with 68.2 percent of American students from urban
12 and suburban areas.

13 (4) Each school day, approximately 3,000 sec-
14 ondary school students drop out of school.

15 (5) Alaska Natives have a substantially higher
16 dropout rate than all other students in Alaska as a
17 group. The dropout rate is 8.8 percent for Alaska
18 Natives compared to 4.7 percent for the 2001–2002
19 school year for other students in Alaska.

20 (6) The 6,000,000 secondary students who
21 make up the lowest 25 percent in terms of achieve-
22 ment scores are 3.5 times more likely to drop out of
23 secondary school than students in the next highest
24 quarter of academic achievement, and are 20 times
25 more likely to drop out than high achieving students.

1 (7) Approximately 25 percent of secondary
2 school students are reading at below basic levels.
3 The problem is even more severe for poor students
4 of color. The average minority or low-income 9th
5 grader performs at only the 5th or 6th grade level
6 in reading.

7 (8) During the 2002–2003 school year Alaska
8 Benchmark Examinations, significantly lower per-
9 centages of Alaska Natives were proficient in read-
10 ing, writing, and mathematics at each of the 3 test-
11 ed grade levels when compared to all other students.
12 These achievement gaps persist into secondary
13 school, where significantly lower percentages of Alas-
14 ka Natives were proficient in the subjects tested on
15 the Alaska High School Graduation Qualifying Ex-
16 amination in all grade levels where that test was ad-
17 ministered in 2002–2003 school year.

18 (9) Achievement gaps persist across racial and
19 socioeconomic lines in rural schools. There are
20 2,500,000 poor children in rural areas and the child
21 poverty rate in some rural areas is 2 to 3 times the
22 national average.

23 (10) Recruiting and retaining good teachers is
24 an enormous challenge in rural areas. The average
25 salary in rural districts is 13.4 percent lower than

1 in nonrural areas, and teachers often teach more
2 than 1 subject, teach in poor working conditions, live
3 far from colleges, have little access to training, and
4 face geographic and social isolation.

5 (11) Low graduation rates and college attend-
6 ance rates are evidence that, in the earlier grades,
7 schools are not meeting the fundamental achieve-
8 ment needs of low-income, minority, and rural stu-
9 dents.

10 (12) Even those students who do graduate from
11 secondary schools and go on to college are struggling
12 because they lack the basic skills to succeed. Ap-
13 proximately 40 percent of all 4-year college students
14 take a remedial course and 63 percent of all commu-
15 nity college students are assigned to at least 1 reme-
16 dial course.

17 (13) A small percentage of low-income students
18 who manage to enter college are able to complete a
19 degree. Of students from families in the bottom 20
20 percent in terms of income who enter college, only
21 27 percent go on to complete a 2- or 4-year college
22 degree within 8 years.

23 (14) Graduation rates impact early drop-out
24 rates in the military. The attrition rates in the mili-
25 tary of both individuals who are not secondary

1 school graduates and GED recipients are 8 percent-
2 age points higher than the attrition rate of sec-
3 ondary school graduates. As a result, the Armed
4 Forces no longer accept secondary school dropouts
5 and put less value on alternative certificates.

6 (15) Students who fail to graduate from sec-
7 ondary school are more likely to engage in criminal
8 activity than students who graduate. A 1-percent in-
9 crease in secondary school graduation rates would
10 save approximately \$1,400,000,000 in costs associ-
11 ated with incarceration, or about \$2,100 for each
12 male secondary school graduate.

13 (16) In today's workplace, nearly 8 in 10 adults
14 with baccalaureate degrees are employed, but for
15 those who completed secondary school only, the
16 number falls to about 6 in 10. And for students who
17 dropped out of secondary school, the number drops
18 further to 4 in 10.

19 (17) Employment projections indicate that jobs
20 requiring only a secondary school degree will grow
21 by just 9 percent by the year 2008, while those jobs
22 requiring a bachelor's degree will grow by 25 percent
23 and those jobs requiring an associate's degree will
24 grow by 31 percent.

1 (18) Personalization of the school environment
 2 has been proven to increase success rates for low-
 3 performing secondary school students. Nearly 50
 4 percent of middle school youth and 40 percent of
 5 secondary school youth report feelings of disengage-
 6 ment from school. Rates are even higher for teens
 7 and minorities in urban schools. These feelings re-
 8 sult in failure to work hard, to seek assistance, or
 9 to take appropriate courses.

10 (19) Effective research-based education pro-
 11 grams that improve secondary school graduation
 12 rates are comprehensive in nature and include inter-
 13 ventions that begin in kindergarten or earlier and
 14 span all the grades through grade 12.

15 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

16 In this Act:

17 (1) AT-RISK.—The term “at-risk” has the same
 18 meaning given such term in section 1432 of the Ele-
 19 mentary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20
 20 U.S.C. 6472).

21 (2) FEEDER PATTERN.—The term “feeder pat-
 22 tern” means a secondary school and the elementary
 23 schools and middle schools that channel students
 24 into that secondary school.

1 (3) ELEMENTARY SCHOOL; SECONDARY
2 SCHOOL.—The terms “elementary school” and “sec-
3 ondary school” have the meanings given such terms
4 in section 9101 of the Elementary and Secondary
5 Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801).

6 (4) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
7 the Secretary of Education.

8 **SEC. 4. PROJECT GRAD.**

9 (a) PURPOSES.—The purposes of this Act are—

10 (1) to provide support and assistance to pro-
11 grams implementing integrated education reform
12 services in order to improve secondary school grad-
13 uation, college attendance, and college completion
14 rates for at-risk students; and

15 (2) to promote the establishment of new pro-
16 grams to implement such integrated education re-
17 form services.

18 (b) GRANT AUTHORIZED.—The Secretary is author-
19 ized to award a grant to Project GRAD USA (referred
20 to in this Act as the “grantee”), a nonprofit educational
21 organization that has as its primary purpose the improve-
22 ment of secondary school graduation, college attendance,
23 and college completion rates for at-risk students, to imple-
24 ment and sustain the integrated education reform services
25 described in subsection (d)(3) at existing Project GRAD

1 program sites and to promote the expansion of Project
2 GRAD programs to new sites.

3 (c) REQUIREMENTS OF GRANT AGREEMENT.—The
4 Secretary shall enter into an agreement with the grantee
5 that requires that the grantee shall—

6 (1) enter into subcontracts with nonprofit edu-
7 cational organizations that serve a substantial num-
8 ber or percentage of at-risk students (referred to in
9 this Act as “subcontractors”), under which the sub-
10 contractors agree to implement the programs de-
11 scribed in subsection (d) and provide matching funds
12 for such programs;

13 (2) directly carry out—

14 (A) activities to implement and sustain the
15 reading, mathematics, classroom management,
16 social service, and college access programs de-
17 scribed in subsection (d)(3);

18 (B) activities to build the organizational
19 and management capacity of the subcontractors
20 to effectively implement and sustain the pro-
21 grams;

22 (C) activities for the purpose of improving
23 and expanding the programs, including activi-
24 ties to further articulate a program for 1 or
25 more grade levels and across grade levels, to

1 tailor a program for a particular target audi-
 2 ence, and to provide tighter integration across
 3 programs;

4 (D) activities for the purpose of imple-
 5 menting new Project GRAD program sites;

6 (E) activities for the purpose of promoting
 7 greater public awareness of integrated edu-
 8 cation reform services to improve secondary
 9 school graduation, college attendance, and col-
 10 lege completion rates for at-risk students; and

11 (F) other activities directly related to im-
 12 proving secondary school graduation, college at-
 13 tendance, and college completion rates for at-
 14 risk students; and

15 (3) use grant funds available under this Act to
 16 pay—

17 (A) to subcontractors the amount deter-
 18 mined under subsection (f); and

19 (B) the costs associated with carrying out
 20 the activities described in paragraph (2).

21 (d) SUPPORTED PROGRAMS.—

22 (1) DESIGNATION.—The subcontractor pro-
 23 grams referred to in subsection (c)(1) shall be
 24 known as “Project GRAD programs”.

1 (2) FEEDER PATTERNS.—Each subcontractor
2 shall implement a Project GRAD program and shall,
3 with the agreement of the grantee—

4 (A) identify or establish not less than 1
5 feeder pattern of public schools; and

6 (B) provide the integrated educational re-
7 form services described in paragraph (3) at the
8 identified feeder pattern or feeder patterns.

9 (3) INTEGRATED EDUCATION REFORM SERV-
10 ICES.—The services provided through a Project
11 GRAD program shall include—

12 (A) research-based programs in reading,
13 mathematics, and classroom management;

14 (B) campus-based social services programs,
15 including a systematic approach to increase
16 family and community involvement in the
17 schools served by the Project GRAD program;

18 (C) a college access program that in-
19 cludes—

20 (i) providing college scholarships for
21 students who meet established criteria;

22 (ii) proven approaches for increasing
23 student and family college awareness; and

1 (iii) assistance for such students in
2 applying for higher education financial aid;
3 and

4 (D) such other services identified by the
5 grantee as necessary to increase secondary
6 school graduation, college attendance, and col-
7 lege completion rates.

8 (e) GRANTEE USE OF FUNDS.—Of the funds made
9 available under this Act, not more than 8 percent, or
10 \$4,000,000, whichever is less, shall be used by the grantee
11 to pay for administration of the grant, with the remainder
12 of funds to be used for the purposes described in sub-
13 section (c) (1) and (2).

14 (f) GRANTEE CONTRIBUTION AND MATCHING RE-
15 QUIREMENT.—

16 (1) IN GENERAL.—The grantee shall provide to
17 each subcontractor an average of \$200 for each
18 pupil served by the subcontractor in the Project
19 GRAD program, adjusted to take into consider-
20 ation—

21 (A) the resources available in the area
22 where the subcontractor will implement the
23 Project GRAD program; and

24 (B) the need for Project GRAD programs
25 in such area to improve student outcomes, in-

cluding reading and mathematics achievement
and, where applicable, secondary school graduation,
college attendance, and college completion
rates.

(2) MATCHING REQUIREMENT.—Each subcontractor shall provide funds for the Project GRAD program in an amount that is equal to the amount received by the subcontractor from the grantee. Such matching funds may be provided in cash or in kind, fairly evaluated.

(3) WAIVER AUTHORITY.—The grantee may waive, in whole or in part, the requirement of paragraph (2) for a subcontractor, if the subcontractor—

(A) demonstrates that the subcontractor would not otherwise be able to participate in the program; and

(B) enters into an agreement with the grantee with respect to the amount to which the waiver will apply.

(4) DECREASE IN GRANTEE SHARE.—Based on the funds or resources available to a subcontractor, the grantee may elect to provide the subcontractor with an amount that is less than the amount determined under paragraph (1).

(g) EVALUATION.—

1 (1) EVALUATION BY THE SECRETARY.—The
2 Secretary shall select an independent entity to evalu-
3 ate, every 3 years, the performance of students who
4 participate in a Project GRAD program under this
5 Act. The evaluation shall—

6 (A) be conducted using the strongest pos-
7 sible research design for determining the effec-
8 tiveness of the Project GRAD programs funded
9 under this Act; and

10 (B) compare reading and mathematics
11 achievement and, where applicable, the sec-
12 ondary school graduation, college attendance,
13 and college completion rates of students who
14 participate in a Project GRAD program funded
15 under this Act with those indicators for stu-
16 dents of similar backgrounds who do not par-
17 ticipate in such programs.

18 (2) EVALUATION BY GRANTEE AND SUB-
19 CONTRACTORS.—

20 (A) IN GENERAL.—The grantee shall re-
21 quire each subcontractor to prepare an in-depth
22 report of the results and the use of funds of
23 each Project GRAD program funded under this
24 Act that includes—

1 (i) data on the reading and mathe-
2 matics achievement of students involved in
3 the Project GRAD program;

4 (ii) statistics on secondary school
5 graduation, college attendance, and college
6 completion rates; and

7 (iii) such financial reporting as re-
8 quired by the Secretary to review the effec-
9 tiveness and efficiency of the program.

10 (B) FORM OF REPORT.—The report shall
11 be in a form and include such content as shall
12 be determined by the grantee, in consultation
13 with the Secretary or the entity selected by the
14 Secretary to evaluate the Project GRAD pro-
15 grams in accordance with paragraph (1).

16 (3) AVAILABILITY OF EVALUATIONS.—Copies of
17 any evaluation or report prepared under this sub-
18 section shall be made available to—

19 (A) the Secretary;

20 (B) the chairperson and ranking member
21 of the Committee on Health, Education, Labor,
22 and Pensions of the Senate; and

23 (C) the chairperson and ranking member
24 of the Committee on Education and the Work-
25 force of the House of Representatives.

1 **SEC. 5. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

2 There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out
3 this Act \$27,000,000 for fiscal year 2006, and such sums
4 as may be necessary for each of the 5 succeeding fiscal
5 years.

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